RAJYA SABHA

Friday, the 3rd July, 2009/12 Asadha, 1931 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock,
MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

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ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Delay in Monsoon

*21. SHRI RAHUL BAJAJ: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state how widespread is the delay in monsoon this year and what impact has it had on the sowing operations?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

The Southwest monsoon had set over Kerala on 23rd May, 2009, about one week earlier than the normal date (1st June) and it covered most parts of Karnataka, Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Rayalseema, most parts of West Bengal and North-eastern States by the first week of June, 2009. But, the progress of monsoon was slowed down afterwards, causing a delay of about one to two weeks over Telangana, Maharashtra, East Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Jharkhand, Bihar and East Uttar Pradesh. As a result, some impact on the sowing of Kharif crops such as Rice, Groundnut, Soyabean was observed. However, with the revival of monsoon in various parts of the country after 25th June, 2009, sowing operations has gained momentum. The situation is being watched closely in coordination with States.

SHRI RAHUL BAJAJ: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the reply of the hon. Minister of Agriculture says that due to delay of the Southwest monsoon for a couple of weeks over some States after the first week of June, there has been some impact on sowing of Kharif crops. So, my first supplementary to the hon. Minister is this. What is the likely reduction in the Kharif output and whether there is enough stock of rice with the Government to deal with the possible fall in production?

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Sir, the sowing operations for various types of cereals and other crops will start in the month of June and before 10th of July substantial area always gets covered. As per the latest information we have got from the IMD, the situation seems to be,

probably, on its way to improve. And, in such a situation, we are expecting an additional area under sowing.

With regard to the second part of the hon. Member's supplementary about the availability of rice in the country, I would like to say that till yesterday we have succeeded in procuring 30 million tonnes, which is a record procurement in the last fifty years. That is why we have stock for one year or a little more than one year in our godowns. So, I don't expect any problem with regard to availability of rice.

SHRI RAHUL BAJAJ: Sir, we are happy with the reply.

So, my second supplementary is: What is the likely impact, if any, on prices of key crops. You have enough stock of rice. So, there will be no affect on that. You will be able to control that. But, if there is price rise on cotton, oilseeds and vegetables — I am talking of consumer price, not wholesale price which is in the negative territory — how long will this last?

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Sir, oilseeds is essentially a rain-fed crop. The problem that the country facing today is essentially in the rain-fed areas *i.e.*, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and parts of Andhra Pradesh and a few other States where substantial area comes under rain-fed. That is why there is a serious impact on the total area of oilseeds sowing. As on today, the situation is a little worrisome. But, we are expecting a positive impact, because we are taking a number of other steps. We have allowed zero duty import. We are trying our level best to make foodgrains available in the country. But, still, with regard to oilseeds, we can wait up to end of July for sowing. Sir, the Government of India had called two meetings of the Agricultural Secretaries of some of the States on 22nd or 23rd of last month. The Agricultural Secretaries, who had been invited, were essentially from the States where there had been less rainfall. We have prepared two plans — Plan-I and Plan-II. These are contingency plans. We are going to wait up to the end of this week of July. We are expecting that we will get rains. But, suppose, if something goes wrong, the second alternative plan is, probably, we will have to shift the crop. For instance, the paddy crop can continue up to August, but there are certain crops that we will not be able to cultivate. So, we will have to change the crops. In such a situation, we will have to see that seed is available. And, we have kept about 15 lakh quintal seeds for contingency plan, which is more than country's demand. We have assured all help to the State Governments and have given additional seeds to all the State Governments. They can use this. Plus, there are two major schemes of the Ministry — the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna and the National Food Security Scheme. We have authorised the State Governments to utilize these schemes. They can take help of the schemes and use the money for any contingency. And, the States are very, very equipped for it.

MS. MABEL REBELLO: Sir, Jharkhand has only 6 per cent irrigation against the national average of 40 per cent. The farmers, when they initially got rains in the month of June, planted the seeds and have, thus, exhausted their seeds. Now, all those seedlings have died. And, now, there are again scanty rains and the farmers in the fields. Since Jharkhand is a naxalite-affected State and since only one rain-fed crop exists there, I would like to know what the Minister proposes to do for the farmers of Jharkhand in these circumstances. How does the hon. Minister propose to assist them so that they can have, at least, one crop and not become migrants all over the country?

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Sir, as per our report from the States, there are two States where, probably, we will have to take sowing operation second time, that is, some part of Gujarat and the State of Jharkhand. For both these States, we have provided substantial seeds and other financial support that they should use.

MS. MABEL REBELLO: Sir, no financial support has been provided to them. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Only one question, per Member, please.

SHRI BIRENDER PRASAD BAISHYA: Sir, the situation in Assam is somewhat declining. In Assam, the rains normally start in March. But, this year, rains started only in the last part of June. So, the scenario in the State is quite different from the other parts of the country. There was drought-like situation in Assam.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please put the question.

SHRI BIRENDER PRASAD BAISHYA: It is quite related to the question, Sir. Now, from the last part of June, the rains have started and the floods have created havoc there. Lakhs of people have been affected because of floods. So, up to June, there was a drought-like situation, but from day-before-yesterday the situation has worsened in Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Dhakuakhana areas of Assam.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please put the question.

SHRI BIRENDER PRASAD BAISHYA: Sir, hectares of cultivable land has been destroyed and lakhs of people have become homeless. I would like to know from the hon. Minister what measures are being taken by the Government of India to help the affected people of Assam.

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Sir, Assam is a State where paddy is the main crop. And, as I said earlier, the paddy cultivation can go up to first week of August. So, they can continue with this. Sufficient seeds have been made available to the State of Assam. If there is any specific problem, calamity or any other such thing, we would definitely be happy to understand from the State Government and we are ready to take appropriate action to resolve the problems of the farming community which is affected because of the present situation.